



# Mc Dougall's Good Stories for Children



## The Story of a Magic Bed on Which Frank Went to Arabia and Did Some Very Wonderful Things

FRANK HANSON was a little boy who did not believe in fairies nor even in mermaids, but all of his brothers and sisters placed the firmest reliance in the stories that their Uncle James told them about such things. Dot, the girl, was even fonder of listening to such stories than Paul or Kent or Rodman, and she always laughed when Frank said there are no elves or brownies and there never was an Aladdin's lamp at all. Now you'll see how Frank was undeceived and how he only knew just how to find them. Mr. Hanson, his father, was a match manufacturer, but his business had fallen off tremendously of late, partly because other men could make matches cheaper and better by newer machinery and partly because Mr. Hanson spent too much time attending to his whiskers.

His whiskers were truly wonderful, and perhaps no one could blame him for devoting so much time to them, for they were two feet long and of a beautiful blue-black hue. At first he used to spend hours combing and brushing them and listening to the winter winds whistling softly through them, making an aeolian music; but as his mind weakened, perhaps because too much of his strength went to hair, he got to braiding them and then arranging them in patterns and designs, tying them in fancy figures, true "lover's knots," "niggerheads" and the like, until finally he could shape his beard in the form of animals like rabbits, guinea-pigs, turtles, hens, etc.

He claimed to be able to make his whiskers assume two hundred and twenty-nine distinctly different shapes. Naturally, his match business languished and almost vanished, but Frank attended to it after school, so that the factory earned a few hundred dollars every week, or enough to support such a large family of boys and girls.

### UNCLE JAMES WAS A MAGICIAN

His Uncle James sometimes assisted him, but James Hanson was a queer man. Frequently he would disappear for many days and suddenly return without any explanation and stay with his brother for a week, when off he would go again. He always took his bed with him wherever he went, a narrow iron bed that folded up so that it could be carried, and he was always far more careful and particular about this bed than of anything else that he possessed.

Now I'll whisper a secret to you while nobody is looking.

James Hanson was a magician, having learned the art from a wizard named Gilligan in his youth, and so he never had to work for a living, and this little ordinary-looking iron bedstead, for which nobody would give two dollars at an auction, was a magic flying-bed. All he had to say was, "Fly, you Bed!" and away it would sail to any place he desired to visit. That's why the bed always disappeared when James Hanson did. One morning James was pleading with his brother to stop toying with his whiskers and attend to business, and after listening patiently to him Mr. Hanson exclaimed:

"I will stop, for I have an idea in which there is money!"

"What is it?" asked his brother. "A noiseless whistle or a smokeless cigar?"

"Neither. It's a twirling umbrella. Just a couple of steel ribs like a pair of bicycle spokes, but by an arrangement in the handle it will whirl around so fast that not a drop of rain can fall on the man who carries it over his head."

"I guess you'd better stick to your whiskers," said James in great disgust, and he left the room. Next morning he had vanished. Frank went to call him and the bed was gone.

"Uncle James has gone again!" he cried. "Here again, back again, gone again to Gilligan. He has gone, bed and board, whatever that means."

But time passed on and Uncle James did not return. Finally when all had given up hope of ever seeing his genial face again the little iron bed was discovered, all mused up, in his room. But he did not appear, and for days they wondered at this remarkable occurrence. After a time the bed was removed to the garret, where sometimes on rainy days the children played.

Sometimes they were wrecked on desert coasts and almost starved, so that they cast lots and decided to eat Dot, but help came before they turned cannibals. She was so sweet that sometimes they regretted that they had not been forced to sample her, but she was very, very glad it hadn't come to the worst. Sometimes the bed was a fort, a block-house or a castle besieged by the enemy on all sides, and noble indeed were the feats of the bold defenders, Dot loading the guns as fast as they were discharged at the enemy. It was a robber's cave, an automobile and even a department store at times, but strange to say they never happened to make a wish while in the bed, so that they never discovered its magic qualities.

### FRANK TAKES A TRIP

One winter morning Mr. Hanson was trying to arrange his whiskers in the shape of a ship in full sail, and finding that the children disturbed him exceedingly at the task, he packed them all up to the garret, where they began to play at being a family of old-time gold-seekers on their way across the Rocky Mountains. Indians, bears and mountain-lions were everywhere, and the danger was so near that they were all huddled close together in the bed-wagon and Frank was growling so terribly to represent a grizzly bear among the rocks, that Dot became frightened.

"Don't let us play at being Rocky-mountainers!" she said. "Let's be an excursion on the river in the good old summer time."

This was better, and while they were sailing swiftly down the river and admiring the scenery, Paul proposed to go in swimming, whereupon all but Frank, who was at the wheel steering the boat, jumped overboard and swam around on the floor buffeting the waves valiantly. Suddenly Frank said:

"I wish we were in some nice, warm climate. I'd like to be in Arabia this minute where the palm-trees and dates grow."

Instantly the bed, with Frank in it, vanished like smoke from the garret, frightening the children so that they almost fell down stairs to tell Mr. Hanson what had happened. He immediately went to the garret to see for himself, and the shock was so great that somehow it caused him to lose his re-



MR. MICHAEL HANSON SHOWS HOW TO MAKE A WHISKER HEN

gard for his whiskers, and going to his room he shaved them all off and then went to the match factory to work.

What happened to Frank after that was most interesting, and I would not have believed it if he had not told the story to me himself. He found the bed shooting through the air with inconceivable speed, so fast that he could scarcely see anything below at all. Sound travels, they say, two thousand feet per second, but the wonderful flying bed went even faster, so that before he really got over his astonishment and fright, for I must confess he was dreadfully frightened at first, he found himself in a warm climate and sailing along over a bleak and lonely mountain range, the mountains of Jebel Shammur, that towered over a sandy desert.

The bed slanted toward the earth after crossing the mountains and went slower and slower until it hovered over a narrow stream called the Wady Ermeck, so called because it runs in a "wady" or valley. Here were so many date palms and fig trees that it was really like a forest, and along the tiny brook beneath the shade of the waving fringe of woodland he saw a dozen striped tents which he knew must be those of Arabs, for he had often pored over pictures of them in his geography.

Two little Arab boys saw him first, of course, for boys are always on the lookout, and they ran away yelling with fright. Then an old man appeared, a man so old that he walked with great difficulty, and when he saw the flying bed he fell flat on his face crying, "Allah! Allah! A genie!" Then came another man not so old but still aged, and he was also terrified, but he stood still, and, trembling, stared at the wonderful spectacle. He was clad in a gorgeous robe of red and yellow and wore a great curved sword at his side, and Frank knew at once that he must be a sheikh or chief of a tribe of Bedouins that roam the desert all their lives long. Of course he was pretty old, for that is what the word sheikh means. He was a bold Arab, however, and soon his courage came back to him and he said:

### THOUGHT HE WAS A GENIE

"If it is a genie, my father, then we are lost; but behold, it seems to me but a small boy upon the back of this strange thing that flies through the air!" The old man mumbled something, but still remained flat on his face. Then the sheikh said to Frank:

"My father is old and toothless, therefore his words are faint. Because he has no teeth he can speak only Gum-Arabic, O stranger from the sky!"

Frank, seeing that the old bed was gently hovering like a bird about to alight, whispered to it and directed it to descend beside the men. It instantly obeyed him and he found the secret of controlling its actions. It minded him just like a gentle horse. "What is this place?" he asked the sheikh. "This is the pleasant vale of Ermeck," replied the man.

"And who are you?" added the lad. "I am the sheikh Omar Khayyam Guzla, and this is my tribe. Here, lying prostrate before your highness, is my aged and worthy father, the sheikh of the tribe, who is now too old to do any-

thing but smoke. Do not be offended because I do not fall on my face before you, but the fact is I have the rheumatism so bad that if I once fell down I would find it very difficult to arise again."

"I'll excuse you, of course," said Frank. "But you must instruct your people to be careful about it, as I always expect it. I am visiting your country to see how you live and what sort of schools you have and all that sort of thing."

"Have you had your breakfast?" asked Omar. When Frank replied that he had eaten nothing since supper the sheikh clapped his hands, and instantly several slaves ran out of the striped tent and asked for orders. He bade them prepare a magnificent meal at once, and when it was ready Frank sat down to his first Arabian repast, a number of dishes of fried dates, boiled figs, rice, eggs, Turkish Delight fig paste and Mocha coffee.

### HEARS ABOUT THE WHIRLBAT

Then he was introduced to all the tribe, for, after you have eaten with an Arab, he trusts you and admits you freely to the bosom of his family instead of taking you to a club and buying you a dinner like an American. His children were very nice, and Frank was instantly attracted toward them, but the curiosity of the sheikh was so great that he had to leave them and answer his questions about the land from which he had come on this wonderful conveyance. When the chief had learned as much as Frank thought he could remember, he asked a few questions himself, for so little is really known about Arabia that all the maps have big bare spaces on them marked "Sandy Desert," but where there are lots of little towns full of people, especially in Arabia Felix or "Happy Arabia." Around the valley in which the tribe was resting there was a good deal of desert land and great mountains with gloomy narrow vales into which the Arabs were afraid to venture, for from the most ancient times they said they had been the haunts of goblins, demons and jinns or genie.

In former ages, even before Egypt had been settled and built up, this part of the world was densely populated; hundreds of great cities dotted the fertile plains, for the climate there was more moist and less arid, and the most beautiful as well as the most enormous buildings, perfect palaces, filled with treasure, stood on every hilltop. Gardens planted with rare and wondrous flowers, spice trees and fruits were everywhere, while immense artificial lakes with vast walls of hewn stone supplied the tall-flashing fountains in the courts and gardens with pure water. Humming-birds, doves, butterflies, bulbuls and pheasants flitted through the green foliage and music was heard in the cool shades everywhere, but now as Frank looked out over the land he saw only crumbling ruins and gray, sullen sand under a blazing sun; and it was difficult to believe that from this destroyed and lifeless land all the civilization once went out to Greece, Egypt, Persia, India and perhaps even China, thousands and thousands of years ago.

"Let us go into some of those dark valleys," he said to Omar, "and see what there is there. Perhaps some old palace may still remain untouched

by time or robber bands and we may find some antiques."

"Not much!" cried Omar. "I am too careful of my health. I've been hearing all about the things that are there, and I am satisfied with that. Don't want to see them personally at all."

"Well, I'll go alone," said Frank. "You may be sorry, when you see me coming back with precious things, that you didn't go along."

Then the sheikh's father, Ben Ali Haddem, spoke and said:

"Danger threatens the man who dare intrude upon the repose of the jinns. My father's grand-uncle once, long ago, went into one of those dark wadis where dwell the evil ones and when he returned he was a mad man."

"What made him mad?" asked Frank.

"He was crazy," replied the aged Arab. "He had left his mind in there. His hair was white as mine is now and he showed by his eyes that he had seen something awful, for he never lost that dreadful stare of terror as long as he lived. In fact, he only lived about thirty years after that and he was never the same man."

"After all, I suppose there's nothing much to see in there," said Frank. "But I think I'll take a little trip around and see the country. So far I've seen nothing but piles of ruins."

"Shades of Jemshid!" cried the sheikh. "That's about all you will see here! Allah has blighted the land with a curse and all is gone to crash ages ago."

"How did it happen?" asked Frank. "What caused all this ruin and devastation. Perhaps it was earthquakes."

"Earthquakes nothing!" said old Ben Ali Haddem. "It was the Whirlbat and no other."

"What on earth is a Whirlbat?" inquired Frank. "I've heard of dingbats and brickbats, but never of a Whirlbat."

"It is a dreadful midnight marauder, a winged terror that swoops down in the darkness and slays; a hideous, ravening, treacherous, cunning monster!" answered Omar, shuddering and looking furtively behind him as if he half expected to see the thing appear.

### MATCHES GREW ON TREES

"What does it look like? Have you ever seen it?" "Yes, twice. Once when it carried off my brother, Mohammed Yacub. A mere boy I was then, and in the twilight it swooped down and seized him and bore him away before he could say 'Jack Robinson,' although that was not what he would have said, of course, being a Bedouin."

"When did you see it again?" asked Frank. "Two years ago in the autumn, when I was coming out with a caravan from Mecca. It came as before in the night and took my best camel-driver, Mike Fatima, as quick as a wink. I saw it quite plainly that time."

"What did it look like?" "Like an enormous bat—a bat as big as seventeen lions," replied the sheikh. "It flew with a peculiar whirling motion like a top spinning, and vanished from my sight as swiftly as a desert snake. I heard its awful voice and Mike's despairing

## He Discovered and Killed the Terrible Whirlbat and Came Home With Match-Growing Earth

shrieks far up in the air long after it had disappeared in the gloom of the sky. For centuries this terror has haunted the land, until it has become a desert and the dwelling place of lions. Once the desert of Robi-el-Khali was a fair garden, now it is a stony waste where the gooboo and the 'erwilliger roam by night and day. Where thousands once dwelt in peace, in the days before Abraham, no men are ever seen, and where our fathers once raised splendid crops of grain and nutmegs you couldn't even raise a disturbance now."

"To-day I will go and hunt for the Whirlbat," said Frank, "and do you come with me as guide."

"Remain here in peace in our lovely valley and trouble not about such matters," said Omar.

So, for a few days Frank was content to remain with the tribe of Omar, taking a few little excursions into the surrounding country to look at the wonderful ruins that covered the hills. In the Wady Ermeck they took life easily, for everything grew there in profusion. The soil was so rich that a stick planted in it would sprout and grow. It was this circumstance that laid the foundations of the Hanson fortune. Frank had lighted a match to amuse the children and extinguished it by sticking it into the black earth.

What was his surprise a few days later to find that it had taken root and was already grown two feet in height. Two days later it was bearing matches in thousands, and in a week he gathered more than a bushel of the very best he had ever seen, and he knew all about matches. This was so wonderful that he determined to carry home a supply of the earth when he returned. The Arabs were not at all surprised, for they had seen many as remarkable things happen.

### ATTACKED THE GREAT BAT

But he grew tired of remaining inactive when he might be hunting the Whirlbat, and so he began to pester the sheikh to go with him. The chief was afraid to venture on the magic bed, having a dread of witchcraft, but finally Frank persuaded him that it was quite safe. When he was convinced he climbed in, gathered his striped robe around him and resigned himself to his fate. All the tribe, trembling, said farewell to the two as Frank whispered to the bed to seek for the Whirlbat, and it darted into the blue sky as if it had not the least doubt of finding the monster's retreat.

In about a minute they saw before them a tall column of marble, black as ebony, at the top of which was a shapeless object. When they drew nearer they saw that it was the monster itself, sound asleep, dreaming perhaps of prey, his great wings hanging down limply and his scaly back glistening in the sunlight. He resembled the pictures Frank had seen of the Pterodactyl, an extinct animal of the days before man came upon the earth. His broad back was covered with horny plates like those of a tortoise. That was what made him invulnerable to arrows and bullets, many marks of which could plainly be seen upon his thick, horny plates. As they approached without any noise the monster did not awaken, but although Omar trembly shook his head in silent protest, Frank steered the bed close to the animal and circled around him so that he could examine him in order to discover a vulnerable spot. But he saw none.

The Whirlbat's skin was like iron, and something must be used that would cut iron. Instantly he thought of sulphuric or nitric acid, but, of course, he knew how impossible it would be to buy acid in the desert. They retired out of earshot of the Whirlbat and held a consultation.

Omar said he had no sulphuric or nitric acid, but another acid could be obtained from the Hyperbolic Palm-tree which would eat iron, stone or anything else.

"Then that's what we'll use," cried Frank. "Let us get some at once."

Back to the Wady Ermeck he hurried, and soon they tapped a dozen of the Hyperbolic palms, and by evening had several gallons of the fiery acid in a huge stone vase. Next morning they placed the vase on the bed, banking it up on every side with earth to hold it steady, and then they flitted away to the pillar of marble, where, as before, they found the monster sound asleep. Rising directly above him, Frank stopped the bed a few feet over the Whirlbat and then tipped the stone vase. The fiery acid fell on him in a deluge, into his eyes, ears and mouth, waking him in agony and he let out a yell that was heard even at Makatien Keber. Then, seeing the bed hovering above him, he sprang into the air and rose at them, but, quick as thought, Frank retreated, and fast as was the Whirlbat, the bed was faster, for it left the monster far behind.

### HOME AGAIN, AND SAFE

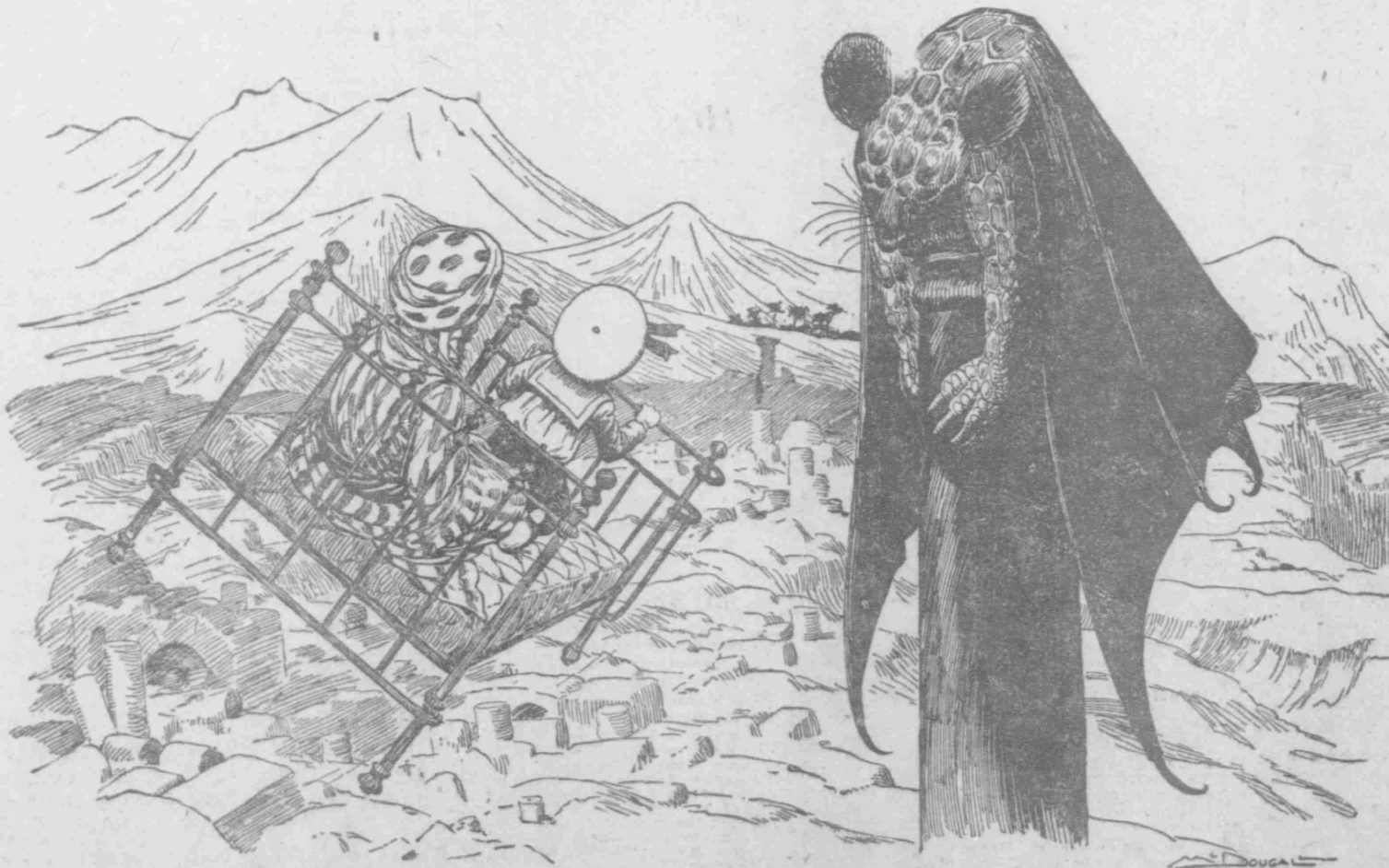
In this manner they crossed Africa entirely before the acid had eaten into the Whirlbat's body far enough to partly disable him, and on they went right out over the Atlantic Ocean. Frank hoped that the monster would last until they got to America so that he would fall in the United States, but the animal's strength was going, and in the very middle of the ocean he suddenly closed his great black wings and plunged down into the sea, which boiled and foamed for a few moments and then rolled on serenely. They watched for some time, but as he did not reappear Frank directed the bed to return home, and in a few minutes astonished his brothers and sisters by appearing in the house accompanied by a richly-dressed Arab.

Well, Omar remained with him, and when he found that America was so nice he decided to stay a year. Frank, seeing that his father had again taken an interest in the business, revealed the secret of the rich Arabian earth to him, and they planted matches in hundreds of pots. Soon they had enormous match-trees growing millions of fine matches, and they cost nothing at all, except to box up and label, so they grew tremendously wealthy.

But before this occurred, Uncle James came home and was immensely surprised to find his bed there. He had accidentally fallen out of it in the wilds of Mesopotamia, and it had shot away like a runaway horse. He had been searching for it all over the world, but never thought of it returning home like a lost dog. My, but wasn't he glad!

Next month he is going to take Omar Khayyam Guzla home again, and I have been invited to accompany them, so there'll be a story about that trip, I assure you.

WALT MCDUGALL.



THE WHIRLBAT WAS FOUND FAST ASLEEP